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Two hundred thirty-eight K-6 children from 19 feeder schools volunteered to attend 30 half-day summer school sessions in a large Midwestern city, prior to any announcement that the school would be integrated. Both black and non-black children were bussed. Poor attendance was considerably higher for the summer session than for the regular school term, but non-attendance and attendance means from before and after the discovery that the school was integrated did not vary significantly (.05) among children of different sex, ethnic or grade level groups. (Author/APM)

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Unannounced Desegregation in an All-Volunteer Summer School: Sex, Grade, and Ethnic Attendance Patterns

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Unannounced Desegregation in an All-Volunteer Summer School: Sex, Grade, and Ethnic Attendance Patterns

ABSTRACT

Two hundred thirty-eight K-6 children from 19 feeder schools volunteered to attend 30 half-day summer school sessions in a large Midwestern city, prior to any announcement that the school would be integrated. Both black and non-black children were bused. No-shows and school absences were considerably higher for the summer session than for the regular school term, but no-shows and attendance means before and after the "discovery" that the school was integrated were not significantly (.05) different between children of each sex, ethnicity or grade level.

Unannounced Desegregation in an All-Volunteer Summer School: Sex, Grade, and Ethnic Attendance Patterns

Current research has provided conflicting data on the relationship between school desegregation and white attendance patterns (Guiles, 1978). Investigations by Farley (1975), Fitzgerald and Morgan (1977), Pettigrew and Green (1976), and Rossell (1976) suggest that desegregation is unassociated with white enrollment stability, while Coleman et al. (1975) and Mumford (1973) suggest that white enrollment decline is associated with desegregation. Each of these investigations focuses on the school district as the unit of analysis, and may confound long-term demographic trends (Taeuber & Taeuber, 1969) with parents' motivation to avoid integrated schools. For example, some white emigration from central cities may be linked to deteriorating neighborhood conditions, which also attract low-income blacks and whites to those areas in search of low-cost housing. Indeed, white emigration from desegregating school districts may stem from deterioration in the economic environment, separate from or concurrent with race-related concerns (Frey, 1979). Further, articulated concerns about busing to achieve desegregation and the elimination of neighborhood attendance area schools may be separate from or confounded with parents' objections to racial mixing (Smith, 1977). This investigation will attempt to avoid some limitations inherent in earlier studies by investigating the attendance patterns in a summer school where 88.2% of the black and nonblack pupils were bused in from other attendance area schools. Busing was intended to maximize enrollment and to

desegregate the school, although the second objective was unannounced and may not have been anticipated by parents. Thus, parents committed their children to attend the summer school independent of neighborhood and busing concerns, and prior to any knowledge that the school(s) would be fully desegregated.

Parents' fear of racial disturbances and their subsequent interpretation of interracial disturbances as racial in origin may further confound the investigation of ethnic bias and enrollment stability in desegregated schools. Public debate and media coverage of anticipated school desegregation (Jacobson, 1979) and news coverage of racial disturbances in newly desegregated schools (Frey, 1979) may increase parents' concern about the safety of their children--independent of their racial attitudes (Students, 1976). School avoidance subsequent to the "discovery" that a school is desegregated may provide a more exact measure of school avoidance due to negative racial attitudes, with limitations. Baily (1972) suggests that school disruptions in desegregated schools and average daily attendance are directly related. Such disruptions may be generated by the subsequent exposure of underprivileged blacks to privileged whites and vice versa (Coleman, 1966). This investigation proposes to control for the influence of racial fears and class bias on school attendance, by (1) investigating school desegregation prior to extensive public debate and media coverage of forthcoming desegregation plans, (2) investigating school enrollment and attendance before and after desegregation was "discovered," (3) sampling black and nonblack pupils from comparable socio-economic classes (i.e., low-income and low-achievement school districts), and (4) investigating a school

setting that did not experience any serious racial incidents.

Another limitation of many previous investigations of white enrollment stability is that they fail to distinguish between parents who want racial mixing and those who simply comply with (1) state laws that mandate school attendance and (2) federal laws and court decisions that mandate desegregation. One rationale for the Brown vs. Board of Education decision was that desegregation laws provide moral persuasion in addition to legal sanction(s) to promote racial mixing. Some parents who object to racial mixing will comply with school desegregation out of respect for the law (Guiles, Gatlin & Cataldo, 1976; Jacobson, 1979). Since summer school attendance is totally voluntary, the investigation of summer school attendance patterns may allow a more exact assessment of parents' motivation to avoid desegregated schools, independent of their desire to comply with state and federal laws. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether parents' desire to avoid racial mixing results in school avoidance, independent of other commonly cited explanations for enrollment and attendance patterns in newly desegregated schools.

Background

Subsequent to a 1976 federal court order to desegregate their schools (but prior to the development of a citywide desegregation program), the school officials of a large Midwestern city developed a plan to insure that the voluntarily attended summer school sessions would achieve racial balance. To accomplish this, in 1977, the pupils of all ethnicities were bused to one of approximately two dozen summer school sites in the city. There was no specific announcement of the desegregation plan to parents, although some parents may have anticipated the

existence of such a plan in view of the recent court order to desegregate.

Setting

The summer school site involved in the study was in a stable "ethnic" all-white neighborhood. The school was not desegregated during the 1976-77 school year, but it was the scene of several anti-black demonstrations. The summer school program offering consisted of 30 half-day sessions of traditional instruction, with additional provisions for reading enrichment and remediation. The summer school staff (four black, four white, and one Spanish) had no experience or special inservice training to deal with newly desegregated classrooms.

Sample

Two hundred thirty-eight K-6 children from 19 public (14) and nonpublic (5) feeder schools in low-income neighborhoods voluntarily enrolled for summer school. Each parent was sent a written notice of the bus schedule, pick-up site, and school assignment. Since 88.2% of the children were bused, both whites and nonwhites shared the burden of adjusting to a strange new school, new teachers, and new classmates (Coleman, 1966).

Ninety-five percent (N = 210) of the enrolled children came from feeder schools with mean Iowa Test of Basic Skills reading and mathematics test scores below city-wide and national means, i.e., both blacks and nonblacks appeared to be equally disadvantaged. The average daily % of attendance for 1975-76 for black feeder schools was 88.18; white, 94.78; and Spanish, 91.40, compared with a city-wide average of 91.75 for the same period. Proportionately more males and whites enrolled in the

Table 1 about here

lower grades, and more females in the upper grades--although the differences were not statistically significant. Interracial relationships were guarded, cautious, and relatively harmonious, i.e., there were no major racial incidents involving bumping, jostling, tripping, or taunting (Coleman, 1966). Reasonably, excessive racial hostility (if any) was manifested in more passive ways--including school avoidance.

Procedure

Data concerning enrollment, attendance, school of origin, ethnicity, sex, and grade level were collected from office records by the school principal.

Analysis of Data

The portion and frequency of pupils attending were tabulated for each demographic subgroup investigated. The portion of no-shows (0 days present), dropouts (1-10 days), poor attenders (11-20 days), and attenders (21-30 days) in each demographic subgroup was examined using the chi-square test for equality of population proportions. Excluding no-shows, t-tests were performed to compare school attendance for sex, ethnic, and grade-level subgroups. The elimination of no-shows allowed a more exact measure of the effect of racial bias on school avoidance, since it eliminated pupils who chose not to attend summer school prior to their knowledge or "discovery" that the school was desegregated.

Results

An examination of Table 2 reveals no significant differences in the

portion of no-shows (0 days), dropouts (1-10), poor attenders (11-20), and attenders (21-30),

Table 2 about here

by sex ($\underline{x}^2(3) = .69$, $\underline{p} > .05$), ethnicity ($\underline{x}^2(6) = 10.84$, $\underline{p} > .05$), and grade level ($\underline{x}^2(6) = 5.53$, $\underline{p} > .05$). Excluding no-shows, $\underline{t}$-tests were performed, comparing the subsample mean(s) in each demographic group with the mean of the best attending subgroup. This procedure allowed the identification of maximal subgroup differences within each demographic group. An examination of Table 3 reveals that females attended an average of 18.82 days, while males attended an average of 17.36 days, a non-significant difference ($\underline{t} = .99$, $\underline{p} > .05$). Combining Spanish, Oriental, and Indian into a category designated as "Other," ethnic differences were also non-significant. White children attended an average of 19.39 days compared with black ($\bar{\underline{x}} = 18.09$) ($\underline{t} = .67$, $\underline{p} > .05$) and "Other" ($\bar{\underline{x}} = 16.59$) ($\underline{t} = 1.27$, $\underline{p} > .05$). Pupils in Grades 4-6 attended an average of 19.69 days compared with Grades 2-3 ($\bar{\underline{x}} = 18.33$) ($\underline{t} = .78$, $\underline{p} > .05$), and

Table 3 about here

Grades K-1 ($\bar{\underline{x}} = 15.92$) ($\underline{t} = 2.03$, $\underline{p} < .05$). Excluding no-shows, the attendance mean for the 180 summer school enrollees was 18.02, or an average daily attendance of 60.3%. By comparison, the average daily attendance for the month immediately preceding the 1976 summer session was 92.8% city-wide and 91.75% for the combined (but unweighted) average of the 14 participating city feeder schools in the study. Attendance

data were not available for other summer schools, previous summer sessions, and nonpublic feeder schools.

Discussion

Summer school probably is a better setting to measure parents' and pupils' willingness to sacrifice classroom education to avoid racial mixing, since the stigma, if not the legal consequences, of missing school in summer is presumably less than for missing school during the regular school year. The findings here suggest that the average daily attendance of summer school enrollees is appreciably less than regular session enrollees, but that these lower attendance levels are not significantly associated with differential levels for males, females, blacks, whites, or "Other" ethnic groups. Oriental and Indian pupils evidence lower attendance rates than any other ethnic, gender, or grade-level subgroup, but their numbers are too few to allow additional analysis of and consequent generalizations from this finding. Oriental, Indian, and Spanish pupils' attendance patterns may be worthy of additional research to ascertain whether their school avoidance in newly desegregated settings is of greater consequence than black and white school avoidance.

Of special interest in this study is whether the initial first-day "shock"of discovering that the school is desegregated results in pupils not returning the following day. No-shows are reasonably not a fair measure of racial avoidance, since most, if not all, bused no-shows are naive of the desegregation plan. Eighty-eight percent of all K-6 pupils are bused, and it can be assumed that all bused pupils attend school on their first day to insure their return ride. Second-day dropouts number 12, or 6.7% of the total shows (eight black, three white, and one

Spanish). In effect, each ethnicity is proportionately represented in the second-day dropout group. No data are available to ascertain what portion of pupils (if any) fails to return to avoid racial mixing, and what portion of pupils fails to return out of dissatisfaction with the summer school program or a particular teacher. It is concluded that the initial first-day "shock" of discovering that the school is desegregated does not result in disproportionately more school avoidance for each ethnic subgroup.

Twenty-eight (11.5%) of the total sample of 238 are nonbused pupils. This group merits special analysis, because some of these pupils may be taken home by parents or may walk home to avoid racial mixing. Proportionately fewer nonbused pupils (5/28; 18%) are no-shows than bused pupils (53/210; 25%), which suggests that the initial first-day "shock" of discovering that the school is desegregated does not result in nonblack pupil no-shows--or at least does not result in more nonblack no-shows than are experienced by the total sample including the bused sample. Excluding no-shows, average daily attendance for nonbused pupils (19.78; S.D., 7.90) is slightly above the sample mean of 18.02. This slightly higher figure is reasonable since bused pupils occasionally miss their buses. The important finding here is that the nonbused (and nonblack) pupils who presumably have more flexibility and control over their school attendance (they could walk home any time) do not avoid the newly desegregated school disproportionately more than other subgroups, including bused-in blacks and whites.

Female pupils' average daily attendance is higher than that of males, but the differences are nonsignificant. Earlier investigations

have established better attendance patterns among females in the elementary school (Lietz & Gregory, 1978), but the impact of school desegregation on those attendance patterns is less clear. The findings of this investigation suggest that female attendance patterns are not disproportionately lower as the result of the burden(s) of adjusting to a strange new school, new teachers, and new classmates with different racial and cultural backgrounds (Coleman, 1966). The larger portion of males attending summer school is partially explained by their being disproportionately represented in the group of pupils repeating a particular grade level. This factor can influence their attendance patterns in either direction. Promise of "special promotion" can motivate some to attend, while earlier failure(s) can depress other pupils' interest in (attending) school.

An examination of Table 3 incorrectly suggests that each successively higher grade level results in an increase in school attendance. Ungrouped grade-level means are: Kindergarten, $\bar{x}$ = 17.07, S = 10.19; Grade 1, $\bar{x}$ = 15.19, S = 10.08; Grade 2, $\bar{x}$ = 17.54, S = 10.08; Grade 3, $\bar{x}$ = 18.97, S = 9.54; Grade 4, $\bar{x}$ = 20.88, S = 9.46; Grade 5, $\bar{x}$ = 19.95, S = 9.01; and Grade 6, $\bar{x}$ = 16.67, S = 11.89. The higher average daily attendance in Grades 4 and 5 can trace to the higher portion of girls in these two grade levels, rather than to desegregation factors. Parents do not appear to send disproportionately more pupils of any grade level to the newly desegregated school. Once enrolled, the school avoidance patterns are not appreciably different among grade levels--when sex-related attendance patterns are taken into account.

Summary and Limitations

Ordinarily, nonsignificant findings (i.e., no differences between groups) are of little consequence, but they are of special importance when there is considerable conflict in the results of related investigations, and when the findings in either case may have considerable impact on broadly accepted national policies and practices for the desegregation of public schools. The findings of no differences in school attendance by ethnicity and sex in a newly desegregated school must be cautiously interpreted. First, all ethnic and sex subgroups may avoid school equally to avoid racial mixing--and, while no group is disproportionately hurt, all subgroups may be equally hurt.

Second, no comparison of summer school attendance prior to 1976 (and desegregation) is made, or is possible due to missing data for those periods. Thus, we can only conclude that no one ethnicity or gender avoids school more than the other group. However, if a particular subgroup tends to avoid school excessively prior to desegregation, this group may be hurt more if the difference was equalized by desegregation. A comparison of sample pupils' attendance rates with their feeder schools' 1976-1977 attendance rates suggests that they are parallel, but 34% lower for each ethnicity, i.e., black, white, and Spanish pupils each attend summer school at approximately 65% of their regular session rates.

Third, it cannot be assumed that, since most pupils come from non-integrated schools, they did not attend one or more desegregated school(s) prior to the 1976-77 school year. Further, there are probably some other-ethnic pupils in each feeder school, but no pupils attend a "black" school or a "white" school with other-ethnic minorities greater than 10%

of the total population. The one "Spanish" school is approximately 62% Spanish--and most nearly approaches an integrated setting. No school in the study meets the federal court guidelines for racially balanced schools.

Fourth, whatever qualities characterize pupils (or their parents) who value summer school experiences are overrepresented and may influence the outcome of this study. Pupils who dislike school are probably underrepresented, while pupils of parents who value education are probably overrepresented. Consequently, disproportionately more pupils who themselves manifest, and whose parents manifest, positive school attitudes may attend summer school. Reasonably fewer problems--including racial and attendance problems--will be evident with this less representative sample.

Fifth, the small sample does not allow a more detailed breakdown of subsamples to determine, for example, (1) whether white females or black males are more prone to drop out of or avoid newly integrated educational settings, and (2) whether sex and ethnic differences appear across grade levels. This is a particular problem among Spanish, Indian, and Oriental children whose attendance appears to be more variable, but whose small numbers preempt a more detailed analysis of their attendance patterns.

In sum, it would appear that busing to achieve racial mixing of pupils does not disproportionately influence summer school attendance rates of pupils at the elementary level. This can be particularly true when pupils of all ethnicities are bused in equal numbers, and when the racial mixing involves pupils of comparable socio-economic status. Extensive desegregation planning may only inflame racial biases, and, reasonably,

school desegregation is more successful with a minimum of public debate. Parents and pupils of all ethnicities seem to be willing to tolerate, if not accept, racial mixing once it is implemented, and, given an opportunity to withdraw their children from a racially mixed school (without legal sanction), most parents seem content to voluntarily retain their children in that school.

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Table 1

Distribution of Pupils by Grade, Race, and Sex (N = 238)

	Grade								
	K	1	2	3/3+	4	5	6	T	$\underline{x}^2$
Sex									
Male	18	26	22	28	12	13	10	129	*
Female	15	20	16	21	17	15	5	109	
Ethnicity[a]									
Black	16	24	19	28	20	14	8	129	
White	10	11	9	10	3	7	4	54	
Spanish	6	10	7	9	4	6	3	45	**
Indian	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	6	
Oriental	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4	
Total	33	46	38	49	29	28	15	238	

[a]Cells for Spanish, Indian, and Oriental were combined to mitigate statistical limitations inherent when the $\underline{x}^2$ test is used with cells < five. The $\underline{x}^2$ value is essentially unchanged ($\underline{p} > .05$) by combining Spanish, Indian, and Oriental totals.

*$x^2(6) = 4.03$, $\underline{p} > .05$.

**$x^2(12) = 5.25$, $\underline{p} > .05$.

Table 2

Sex, Ethnicity, and Grade of Pupils (N = 238) Attendance Patterns

	Days Present					
	0	1-10	11-20	21-30	Total	
Sex						
Male	31	32	18	48	129	*
Female	27	23	14	45	109	
Ethnicity[a]						
Black	28	30	18	53	129	
White	16	11	2	25	54	
Spanish	12	9	10	14	45	**
Indian	2	3	0	1	6	
Oriental	0	2	2	0	4	
Grade						
K-1	20	22	10	27	79	
2-3	24	18	14	31	87	***
4-6	14	15	8	35	72	
Totals	58	55	32	93	238	

[a]Cells for Spanish, Indian, and Oriental were combined to mitigate statistical limitations inherent when the $\underline{x}^2$ test is used with cells < five.

*$\underline{x}^2(3) = .69$, $\underline{p} > .05$.

**$\underline{x}^2(6) = 10.84$, $\underline{p} > .05$.

***$\underline{x}^2(6) = 5.53$, $\underline{p} > .05$.

Table 3

Attendance Means by Sex, Ethnicity, and Grade Level (N = 180)[a]

Group	N	Means	SD	t-score[b]
Sex				
Female	82	18.82	9.62	
Male	98	17.36	10.19	.99 n.s.
Ethnicity				
White	38	19.39	10.88	
Black	101	18.09	10.00	.67 n.s.
Other[c]	41	16.59	8.85	1.27 n.s.
Grade Level				
4-6	58	19.69	9.81	
2-3	63	18.33	9.73	.78 n.s.
K-1	59	15.92	10.24	2.03 p .05
Total	180	18.02	9.93	

[a]Excludes 58 no-shows

[b]Compares highest subgroup mean(s) with lower subgroup mean(s).

[c]Other includes 33 Spanish surnamed ($\bar{x}$ = 17.36, S.S. = 8.99), 4 Oriental ($\bar{x}$ = 14.75, S.D. = 7.76), and 4 Indian ($\bar{x}$ = 12.75, S.D. = 8.26).